

Highway 217 Corridor Project Development Study

Work Program Summary

Background/Need

Oregon Highway (ORE) 217 is the major north-south transportation route for eastern Washington County. For most of its length, it consists of four through lanes (two in each direction) and auxiliary lanes between interchanges. Designated as part of the National Highway System (NHS), traffic volumes have grown significantly with the development of the County. From 1989 to 1998 the daily traffic volume on ORE 217 has increased nearly 20%. Current peak hour volumes are about 10,500 vehicles per hour in some sections, which averages about 1,750 vehicles per hour per lane. This represents nearly 100 percent of the available capacity.

Recent transportation planning efforts, ODOT's Western Bypass Study, Metro's 2000 Regional Transportation Plan, and the Oregon Highway 217 Initial Improvement Concepts Technical Memorandum, all recognize the need for at least one additional through lane in each direction on Highway 217. It has also been concluded that three through lanes, plus auxiliary lanes or braided ramps, in each direction is the maximum that can fit within the right of way envelope without significant impacts.

Purpose

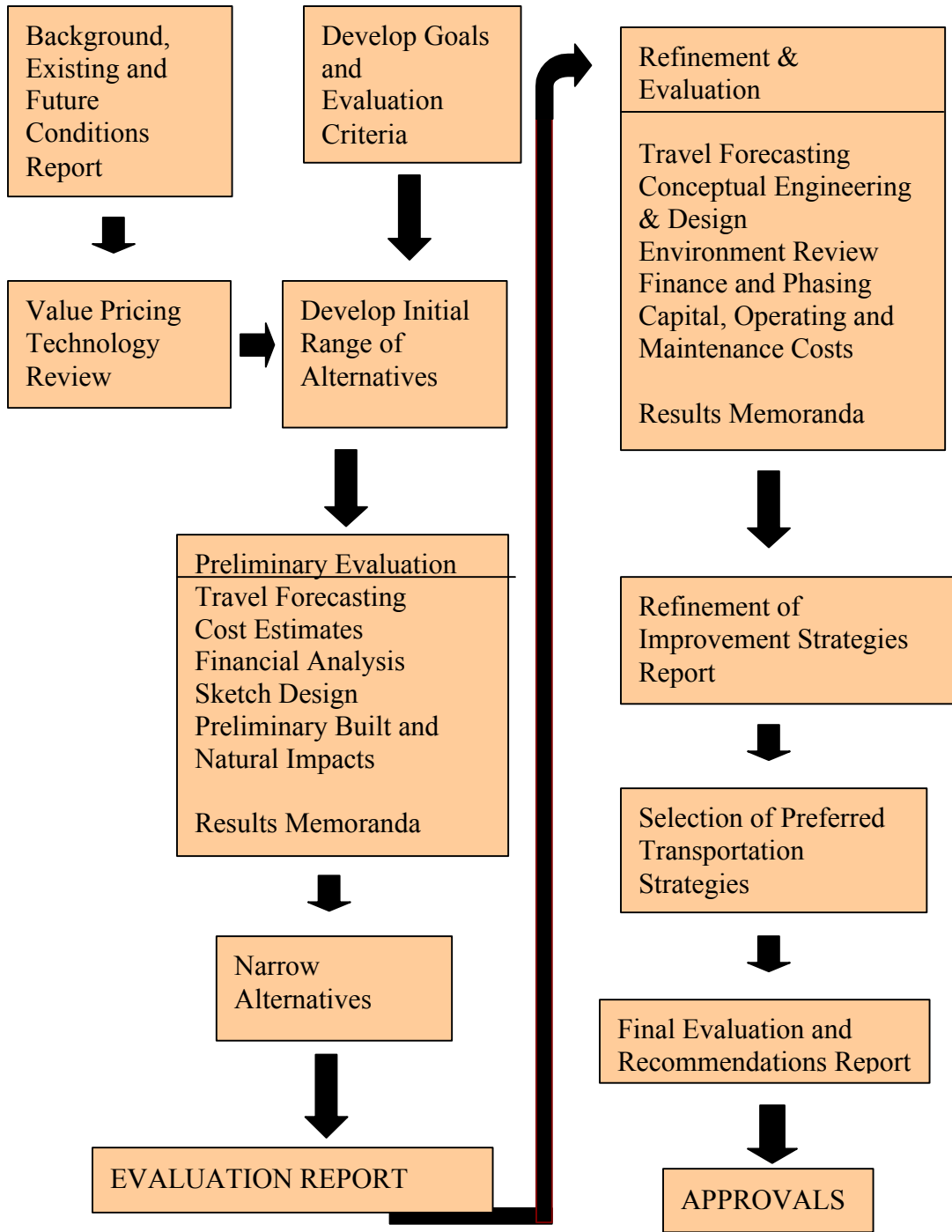
The Highway 217 Corridor Study Work Program is designed to facilitate the selection, and promote the implementation, of transportation strategies for Highway 217 between I-5 and US 26. A series of highway improvement alternatives and demand management strategies will be developed and analyzed. Engineering and operational characteristics, public acceptance, affects on accessibility and financial feasibility will be evaluated. Based on prior analyses, all alternatives include bringing this facility to six through lanes for its entire length plus braided ramps or auxiliary lanes. General purpose and managed lane approaches (including carpool and peak period priced lanes) will be evaluated for the new lanes. Interchange arrangements will be analyzed and refinements proposed. In addition, varying levels of transit service, demand and system management strategies and arterial improvements will be considered as a complement to highway improvements.

The study will include a significant public involvement effort. Outreach efforts will be keyed into major technical milestones and information obtained from the public will feed into the technical effort. The flow chart, Figure1, identifies major elements in the corridor planning study and their relationship to each other.

Highway 217 Corridor Study Flow Chart
Figure 1

Phase I: Development of Initial Alternatives

Phase II: Refine & Evaluate
Transportation Improvement Strategies



Project Goals

- Engage the public in discussions about possible improvement strategies.
- Support and enhance Centers by improving access to Centers and connectivity within the Centers.
- Consider a range of demand and system management approaches and determine if they are appropriate for this corridor. Management strategies could include general purpose, high occupancy vehicle and value-priced lanes.
- Develop an improvement strategy to address corridor transportation needs to the level of detail necessary to begin more advanced environmental work.
- Establish a phasing plan that identifies projects and strategies for implementation in the near, short and long term.
- Consider a range of financing options.

Approach

Metro is the project lead. Project partners include ODOT, Washington County, the cities of Beaverton, Tigard and Lake Oswego and TriMet.

The project will build upon existing land use and transportation plans for the area and utilize existing studies, particularly analysis and findings from the *Highway 217 Initial Concept Report*, and area transportation system plans. Due to the critical role that Highway 217 plays within the communities it serves, the study will focus on strategies that promote access to, and development of, regional centers and employment and industrial areas.

The goal of the effort is to develop projects that can be feasibly implemented. Background work has indicated that the addition of a new lane in each direction and associated braided ramps on this facility are necessary. They will cost significantly more than is currently expected to be available in the next 10 years. For this reason, the study will focus on developing financing and phasing plans. In addition, particularly because phasing and innovative finance techniques will be considered, significant public outreach is anticipated to build public understanding of new ideas and develop recommendations with high levels of public support. Outreach will begin with involved agencies and identified community stakeholders and broaden to include users of Highway 217 and other interested community members as specific alternatives are developed and issues are identified. Newsletters, workshops, stakeholder interviews, meetings with neighborhood and community groups, focus groups and a community questionnaire are planned. Additional outreach techniques such as small group meetings and a public opinion survey are budgeted and will be used, if needed, to address particular alternatives, groups or concerns.

End Products

- System improvement strategy(ies) and prioritized project list;
- Implementation plans, for near, medium and long term projects;
- Final report documenting the evaluation and narrowing process; and

- Description of alternatives to the degree of detail needed to commence federal environmental review and more detailed design.

Timeline

At this time it is anticipated that the study will take approximately 18 months to complete after contracts are signed.

Proposed Decision-Making Structure

A consistent decision-making structure will be used throughout the study. In this structure, the Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) would be the primary advisory body for the study. Based on input from the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and the public involvement process, the PAC would recommend alternatives for further study to local, regional and state elected officials as well as make interim recommendations about the direction of the study. Figure 2 illustrates the study's organization.

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

A TAC will provide expertise and input from technical representatives of the cities of Beaverton, Tigard and Lake Oswego, Washington County, ODOT, TriMet, federal and state environmental agencies and Metro. It will meet frequently, at least once a month, throughout the study to review and provide input on all major work products.

Senior staff from participating agencies and jurisdictions will meet periodically to provide overall advice on project direction. They will convene as needed, either separately or in combination with the TAC, at key decision points or when specific issues arise.

Policy Advisory Committee (PAC)

The study's PAC will provide project oversight, make policy recommendations and ensure on-going public input into the study process. The PAC will also make final study recommendations on narrowing of alternatives and carry them forward for approval from the appropriate local, regional and state bodies.

The PAC is comprised of a combination of elected officials and citizens from the corridor. Citizen representatives were drawn from commercial and industrial companies in the study corridor, neighboring residential communities and environmental and transportation interests. Elected officials include representatives from the cities of Beaverton, Tigard and Lake Oswego, Washington County and Metro. All PAC meetings are open to the public.

Funding

The study will be funded through a variety of sources. Metro has budgeted \$700,000 for the study. In order to fill budget gaps, Metro applied for and received an additional \$400,000 value pricing grant from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). In addition, Washington County will use \$80,000 of MSTIP (Metropolitan Surface Transportation Improvement Program) to cover the required local match obligations for the study.

Highway 217 Corridor Study – Organization Chart

Figure 2

